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thus to become a discordant element in a philosophy and science based on immediate causes alone.

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#### THE RISEN CHRIST AT DAMASCUS.

In any consideration of Jesus's resurrection appearances, whether to the disciples or to Paul, it is well to make a distinction between the vision hypothesis and the apparition hypothesis advanced in explanation of that remarkable series of events. The term *vision* is commonly used of what is seen in a dream, ecstasy, trance, or the like, and especially of experiences of a purely subjective nature. The term *apparition* is more suitable in those cases which seem to be accompanied by none of the abnormal psychical conditions, and in which the impression of the objective reality of the appearance is more strongly and vividly felt by the perceiver.

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the supposition that Jesus's death on the cross was only apparent and that he was afterwards so revived that he was able to appear again among his friends: for although this grotesque hypothesis has been often accepted as explaining the appearances to the disciples, it could certainly not account for the appearance to Paul at Damascus. So also the rationalistic explanations of Renan and others, of a storm on Mt. Lebanon, a flash of lightning, or a sudden attack of ophthalmic fever, need not concern us here. The view that Paul was stricken with sudden blindness in which he recognised the arresting grace of God<sup>1</sup> is ingenious, but is unsatisfactory in important particulars, and also finds little support in the evidence given by Acts, chap. xxvi, the passage containing the earliest account of the event outside of Paul's own writings. And again, Baur's method of proving from the Acts accounts, without regard to Paul's testimony, that the appearance was simply visionary and was later transformed into a myth, is now generally rejected.

The vision hypothesis in varying form has been advocated by such scholars as Holsten, Hausrath, Pfeiderer, Weizsäcker, and Holtzmann. Their conclusions always rest upon a large basis of truth, but are generally to be regarded with suspicion in proportion as they affirm the simply naturalistic character of the event. The hypothesis of Holsten combines the usual features of the vision hypothesis with certain other ingenious elements, and rests upon three fundamental propositions: (1) That Paul made no distinction between vision and supernatural reality; (2) that the later visions of Paul were essentially similar to the appearance at Damascus; (3) that the previous Christophanies to the disciples were visions and regarded as such by them and by Paul. Stated more fully, Holsten's theory affirms

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<sup>1</sup> Matheson, *Spiritual Development of St. Paul* (1890).

that visions were currently regarded as the chief means of divine revelation and that their objective reality was never questioned. According to this view, for instance, the distinction made in Acts xii. 9 between a vision and an actuality is not a distinction between bodily and spiritual realities, but merely between realities conceived of as existing in the earthly or heavenly state. In other words, the Jews regarded a vision as an objective heavenly reality and not a mere symbol of something else. Accordingly the Christophanies were believed to be visions having objective reality and giving assurance of Jesus's resurrection and life in the heavenly state. To express this still differently, the disciples believed that Jesus had left his earthly body in the tomb and had after his resurrection been clothed in a heavenly body of light by means of which he was able to appear to men on earth, thus indicating to them his resurrection. And let it be all along remembered that these were really subjective visions (according to Holsten's view), arising in the disciples' minds from a sub-conscious conviction of the truth of Jesus's resurrection, and having all the appearance of objective reality. And, as admitted by Holsten himself, such visions would lead to but one conclusion, namely that Jesus was in the heavenly life with God. That they would indicate Jesus's bodily resurrection is not a part of the hypothesis, which is bound to deny this belief to the apostles and attribute it to later tradition.

The basis of truth underlying the vision hypothesis must not be disregarded. Paul himself was subject to visions, especially in the important crises of his career; and that these visions were apt to be of an ecstatic character is quite evident in 2 Cor. xii. 2-4, where the apostle testifies that on one such occasion he was unconscious of his own bodily presence, and like the East Indian "adepts" entered a state of "illumination" in which he heard words which the world was not ready to receive. But on the occasion of his conversion what a combination of circumstances favorable to an ecstatic experience!—the fatigue of the long journey across the desert beneath the noonday sun; the remembrance of the odious work of persecution which was now to be renewed; the fruitless struggle for righteousness in contrast to the joyous confidence of the Christian martyrs; finally, the lingering recollection of the dying Stephen and his vision of the glorified and ascended Christ. How gladly would Paul be convinced, if he could but surmount the difficulty of the resurrection! (Holsten, Pfeiderer.) Then moreover, "the pure bracing air of the desert produces an extraordinary elation of mind. The very sanest seldom escape without hallucinations."<sup>1</sup> How natural, then, that all these circumstances should unite in raising before Paul's eager imagination a glorious image of light in which he recognised the heavenly Adam, "the man upon the clouds," the Messiah himself risen from the dead!

Now much of this representation must be acknowledged as true; but the bearing of such facts as these must never be lost sight of. In Paul's case the *condi-*

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<sup>1</sup> Sprenger, *Mohammed*, I., 216.

tions were exceedingly favorable for witnessing an extraordinary phenomenon, and under other conditions the event might have assumed a very different form. These circumstances, therefore, are to be taken into account in explaining what occurred; they are the natural conditions, and natural conditions are required for every event that ever takes place. But supernatural conditions are also required, for all events have both a natural and supernatural aspect at one and the same time; and any hypothesis which disregards this fundamental principle is to be rejected at the outset.

The arguments ordinarily adduced against the vision hypothesis are to a large extent worthless. Especially is this true of the attempted contrasts between Paul's other visions and his experience at Damascus. Thus we are told that elsewhere Paul shows the greatest reluctance to speaking of his visions, but that he makes it his loudest boast that he has seen the Lord.<sup>1</sup> Whereas Paul would very naturally give the latter event full publicity, since it was the guarantee of his apostleship and the one circumstance which placed him on equal footing with the Twelve. Again, we are reminded that Paul in his ecstatic trances felt himself snatched up into paradise, but that at Damascus he had no such experience—as if the ecstatic state were bound to result on each occasion in the same or similar sensations without variation in imagery or vividness. Further, Beyschlag argues from Paul's three days' blindness that there must have been an objective reality; although it is now well recognised that hysterical blindness is one of the ordinary symptoms of the ecstatic condition.<sup>2</sup> Beyschlag also cites Paul's vivid recollection of the exact time and place of the Christophany as an evidence that it was not a mere ecstatic vision—as if it were not a usual matter for Paul to remember years afterward the exact circumstances of his visions, whether at Troas or Jerusalem. It is also pointed out that Paul was a man who urged the necessity of testing the spirits of ecstatic revelation,<sup>3</sup> and that accordingly he could have made no mistake in regard to the nature of the appearance at his conversion. As a matter of fact, the dividing line between true perception and illusion or hallucination is often impossible to determine, and the ecstatic trance occurs in every degree of intensity from the slightest aberration to the most profound catalepsy.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the most cautious observers are often found to be the victims of the most unaccountable delusions. And finally, when it is urged by Beyschlag, Krauss, and others, that a vision could never have led Paul to a belief in Jesus's bodily resurrection, we can only say that it would be difficult for a vision to produce such a belief, but certainly not impossible. As a whole, the refutation of the vision hypothesis has called forth many misdirected efforts which have proved nothing except the superfluous zeal of their authors.

<sup>1</sup> So Weiss, Paret, Sabatier, Godet.

<sup>2</sup> See James, *Principles of Psychology*, I., 206.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Bernheim, E. Gurney, Baldwin, James, Sidis.

And further, in the case of Holsten's hypothesis, it is useless to argue, as Beyschlag does,<sup>1</sup> that the Acts writer thinks of the appearance as visible to Paul's companions and therefore not a vision; for according to Holsten's theory the Christophany would be regarded as an objectively existent heavenly reality and as such visible to all present. And again, it is quite futile to contend that such appearances, regarded as visions of heavenly reality, would not have led the disciples and Paul to a belief in Jesus's bodily resurrection, for this Holsten himself acknowledges, taking refuge in the assertion that this material conception was the product of later tradition.

The vulnerable point in Holsten's theory is not its psychological impossibility, for psychologically it is not only possible but exceedingly plausible. Its vital defect lies in the fact that it is unhistorical, resting upon a gross misconception of the Biblical theory of visions and upon a false notion of the Jewish and apostolic doctrine of bodily resurrection. In the first place, it is untrue that in those times men made no distinction between vision and supernatural reality,<sup>2</sup> for the essential characteristic of the Biblical vision is its symbolism. But in the second place, as Beyschlag has further pointed out, the hypothesis of Holsten rests upon a Hellenistic doctrine of resurrection found only in Josephus and later writers.<sup>3</sup> It is a mistake to lose sight of this fact and strive to show that "in this attempt to explain the rise of the Christophanies which led to the belief in Jesus's resurrection lies an inner contradiction, namely that the belief itself is always posited as giving rise to the visions" (Weiss). Certainly it is no contradiction to suppose that a sub-conscious belief in Jesus's resurrection, present in the disciples' minds on the basis of the greatness of Jesus's own personality, should come to full certainty in a vision. So when a final appeal is made to the empty tomb to refute the vision hypothesis (Beyschlag, Gebhardt, Güder, Weiss, and others), Holsten simply replies that the apostles thought of the resurrection as the clothing of the released soul with a new body of glory, the fleshly body being left to pulverise in the tomb, or else being mysteriously stolen, the theft being charged upon the disciples. The decisive question to be put to Holsten is simply this: What was actually meant and understood by the "resurrection" of Jesus? What did Paul himself understand by the term? There can be but one answer: he understood the living again of Jesus's entombed body, whether in material or glorified form.<sup>4</sup> The resurrection body,

<sup>1</sup> *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 1864 and 1870.

<sup>2</sup> See Num. xii. 6-8; Gen. xli.: Acts x; xvi. 9; etc.

<sup>3</sup> See also Steude, *Theologische Studien und Kritiken*, 1887.

<sup>4</sup> So 1 Cor. xv. 4, where Paul mentions the tomb as an essential middle term between Jesus's death and resurrection, regarding the latter as a coming forth from the tomb accompanied by a transfiguring change (cf. Matt. xxvii. 53; John v. 28 f.). Even in the case of the decomposed body, Paul posited a connection with the new body; how much more in the case of the dead but not decomposed body of Christ! (Rom. viii. 3.) Of course the new body would not be the same

according to Jewish thought, was not a new and essentially different body from the earthly one; it was a body of flesh transformed into a body of glory. This position is fully supported by the emphasis placed upon Jesus's bodily resurrection by the primitive apostles and by Paul himself.<sup>1</sup> It is evident, therefore, that it is on these grounds that Holsten's whole theory falls to pieces, namely its misconception of Biblical visions and its un-Jewish resurrection doctrine.

We may notice, in passing, the theory of Holtzmann, which embodies the vision hypothesis in its most attractive form.<sup>2</sup> Briefly stated it is as follows: The exalted Christ is a life-giving spirit with a corresponding spiritual body, consisting not of flesh and blood, but having the form of the heavenly man.<sup>3</sup> Paul's idea, therefore, of the Christ who appeared to him is of a fleshless and bloodless light-substance which by its very nature could become visible only to the inner man and which could appear only upon the mirror of his spirit.<sup>4</sup> Holtzmann's conclusion is that the appearance at Damascus consisted simply in an inner vision of the heavenly man of Paul's previous thought, arrayed in a body of glory. This variation of the vision hypothesis depends upon the quite unwarranted assumption that Paul believed the "fleshless and bloodless light-substance to be by its very nature visible only to the inner man." This theory is unjustifiable in its disregard of the express statement of Acts, that the phenomenon was visible both to Paul and to his companions, and also in its perversion of the evident intention of Paul's own declaration that he has "seen the Lord." It is no less than precarious to attribute our modern philosophical conceptions to a Jew of the first century who was a disciple neither of Kant nor of Berkeley nor of Hegel.

It is wholesome to acknowledge, however, that the vision hypothesis as usually understood rests upon a very considerable basis of truth, and that in so far as it does so it must continue to command the attention of thoughtful men. It is no argument against it to say that it does not explain Paul's boast of having seen the Lord, that it does not account for the ethical character of the event, that the occurrence itself does not bear the marks of an ecstatic vision, etc. These and similar assertions are futile. If the desert journey, the midday heat, "the vast silence of nature," Paul's fatigue, his hitherto unrewarded search after a higher righteous-

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in organism,—but the same as being the organ of the soul (Beyschlag; cf. 1 Cor. vi. 13 f.). To Paul our modern ideas of a purely immaterial existence deprived of all space relationships would have been inconceivable. (See also Weber, *System der altsynagogalen palästinischen Theologie, etc.*; Schultz, *Alttestamentliche Theologie.*)

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 3, 22; ii. 31–36; iii. 15, 21; iv. 2, 33; v. 31; x. 40, 41; xvii. 31; Rom. i. 4; iv. 25; v. 10; viii. 10 f., 34; x. 9; 1 Cor. xv. 4; 2 Cor. iv. 14; v. 1. etc.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gilbert, *The Student's Life of Paul* (1899).

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 44, 49 f.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18; cf. iv. 6, and Philip. iii. 21.

ness, and his naturally meditative and visionary disposition will assist in an explanation of what took place, these facts must not be thrown out of court, even if their assistance require to be supplemented from another quarter. The rationalistic critic declares that these conditions explain the whole matter; with equal one-sidedness the defender of the traditional faith affirms that nothing short of a marvellous and stupendous miracle could have led to Paul's Christophany and conversion. In point of fact, neither the merely naturalistic hypothesis alone nor the supposition of a supernatural marvel alone is a satisfying explanation.

It is a serious mistake to judge Paul's Christophany solely according to our Western standards of thought and character. Paul's Orientalism entered into the very fabric of his being. And again, his chronological position in the relative progress of the race must never be lost sight of. Truth must ever be revealed (or discovered) under the necessary limitations of time and place and individual development. Is it religious truth alone which requires a miracle for its revelation? Or is the religious genius exempt from the laws of the human intellect, so that he must have a special dispensation of miraculous guidance? And when the revelation comes to him, are the natural means of communication so insufficient that only the extraordinary and inexplicable channels are available? Paul was a religious genius whose conversion was due to the intuitive comprehension of a great ethical truth, namely that his career of inquisition was a violation of his own best instincts, and that there was a law within more sacred than the external legalism which he was seeking to defend. This truth he perceived suddenly, intuitively, or to express the matter differently, he had an ethical and religious revelation from heaven. Both forms of expression are admissible; they are not mutually exclusive, for they merely state the two sides of one and the same truth. In what form should this revelation come to him? Let us remember that Paul was an Oriental, a Jew, a Pharisee, trained in the mysticism of his ancestral religion, immersed in the current philosophy and theology, and limited by the stage of development which the race had up to that time reached. The answer must depend in every case upon the individual. In our case it might be simple conviction; in Paul's case Christ himself appeared before the persecutor in a glorious body of light.<sup>1</sup>

The distinction between vision and apparition is fully justified by the results of the most recent scientific research, which show unquestionably that there is an actual connection of some sort between the objective fact and the perception of that fact through an apparition where its perception through the senses cannot be supposed; and, moreover, that this connection is not due to chance.<sup>2</sup> Such apparitions, therefore, are not merely subjective visions originating in the mind of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pfleiderer, *Paulinismus*.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, a census of such coincidental apparitions (many of the cases having been recorded before they were verified) showed that the number of coincidences was 350 times greater than the law of chance required. See Hyslop, "Results of Psychical Research," *Harper's Monthly*, April, 1900.

percipient; on the other hand, by some means we know not what, they are due to the operation of the mind of another. When Paul fell prostrate on the road to Damascus, he was conscious of being<sup>1</sup> in the presence of a personality which transcended his own, the man whose name he had been persecuting, and who now stood before him as one from the dead, yet with all the appearance of objective reality. The visible manifestation was coincidental with Paul's conversion, yet not the cause of it, since we have already found the cause to have been ethical and not objective. This coincidence was not due to chance; there was a connection between the apprehension of the ethical truth and the experience of the visible manifestation. In other words, there was an apparition of an actually existent personal being. But at this point the objection will be raised that if the visible manifestation was not the cause of the ethical intuition, then the latter was the cause which produced the visible manifestation. We gladly admit this possibility, for we have just seen that there was a connection between the two events which was not due to chance, and now the nature of the connection becomes apparent. The intuition of ethical truth took on objective form and appeared to Paul as a visible manifestation. What then becomes of the evidence just adduced for the presence of an actually existent personal being other than Paul's self? The answer is quite clear: that evidence consists not in the visible manifestation but in the ethical intuition, whose source was the Author of truth. And once more, if it is objected that this is a mere play of words which leads us back to the simplest form of the vision hypothesis of a visible manifestation conjured up from the depths of Paul's own mind, we again acknowledge the fairness of the objection and at once declare our willingness to accept the vision hypothesis in its simplest form, but on one condition, namely that the origin of Paul's ethical intuition as coming from a divine personality be left undisputed. In that case, however, the appropriate term for the visible manifestation is not vision but apparition. The distinction is between the pantheistic and the theistic interpretations of the event.

After a life-long study of the problem of Paul's conversion, that keen-minded critic and rationalist Baur declared that the event was "a marvel whose inner mystery no dialectic or psychological analysis could explain." And even Renan has admitted that if Paul's conversion "was not a miracle in the old traditional meaning of the word, it remains a psychological problem forever insoluble by us of to-day." But happily the problem did not rest with the conclusions of Baur and Renan; for to-day it is neither a miracle nor an insoluble mystery. The apparition hypothesis<sup>1</sup> in which we find the ultimate solution accords not only with the testimony of the Biblical documents but also with a wider view of the nature of the "world ground" and of the method of divine revelation. Moreover, the same hypothesis will account fully for the previous appearances of the risen Lord to the

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<sup>1</sup> The so-called "theistic vision" hypothesis, advocated by Lotze, Schweizer, and others.



disciples. It was no ordinary mortal whose life-blood had been poured out upon the summit of Calvary. To Peter and his companions the very idea of Jesus's death had been inconceivable;<sup>1</sup> and after the crucifixion they realised intuitively from their total impression of that tremendous personality that he was still alive, that he must in the very nature of the case triumph over death. In other words, this truth came to them as a divine revelation. As in Paul's case, the basis of this revelation was distinctly ethical. As in Paul's case the revelation (or intuition) took the form made necessary by the current modes of thought. Both with the disciples and with Paul the great spiritual truth was of necessity clothed in the imagery of Jewish theology. Acknowledged now as Messiah both by the disciples and by Paul, Jesus could not, according to their thought, remain in Sheol: with such a man death must be but the gateway into life. So overwhelming was this realisation that Jesus himself seemed to stand before them, visible to the eye of sense; an angel or spirit could be no longer supposed, and the bodily resurrection of Jesus was accepted and became the dogma of the primitive Church. And this is neither a mystery nor a miracle, since the apparitions came on the basis of psychological conditions which were undoubtedly present and can be clearly traced, and they came in striking harmony with the usual manner of apparitions as now beginning to be known to science through the data of hundreds of recorded instances.<sup>2</sup>

It has been argued that the two simultaneous acts, the one by Paul, the other by the spirit, were either interdependent or independent; that in the first case the Spirit caused Paul's conversion, and that in the second case the coincidence of the events was miraculous, so that we have a miracle in either case.<sup>3</sup> Let us acknowledge that the events were interdependent, and that Paul's conversion was the work of the Spirit; but that it was a miracle, or in any wise out of harmony with recognised natural laws, cannot be demonstrated. And when it is urged that a visible apparition was bound to be in a certain sense objective since it involved the activity of the visual centres of the brain in order to the production of the optical illusion, and that the production of such an activity was as much a miracle as the presentation of a material form before the eyes would have been, we must again dissent, on the ground that the natural process of intuition (or revelation) involves brain activity and yet is not a miracle; and the activity of the visual brain centres is no more miraculous than that of the higher intellectual and moral centres.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. xvi. 22.

<sup>2</sup> One of the most clearly recognised principles in this connection is that such apparitions are in large part the creation of the mind of the percipient on the basis of a suggestion or of an intuitive apprehension of some truth not perceived through the material senses. In Paul's case this truth was the messiahship of Jesus; with the disciples it was Jesus's triumph over death; in each instance it was an ethical intuition on their part, an act of revelation on the part of the Absolute Personality.

<sup>3</sup> Massie, *Expositor*, Third Series, Vol. X., 1889.

But finally, we should not pass unnoticed the apologetic objection to the apparition hypothesis, that it makes God, or Christ, the author of a sort of optical delusion, so that the Church with its hope of immortality was founded upon a lie. The objection is really of little moment. The Church with its hope of immortality was founded upon an ultimate reality—the personality of Jesus. The essential fact about the resurrection was that Christ had risen in final triumph over death. That this spiritual triumph was conceived of in very material fashion was a necessary incident of the times, a natural outcome of Jewish and popular thought, and not a part of the spiritual truth which came from God. As to what became of the material body of Jesus, let us acknowledge frankly that we do not know. Its removal by others without the knowledge of the disciples, or a mistake as to the tomb, or the immediate departure of the sorrowful company to Galilee—events such as these are not accidents but come to pass under the guidance of an all-wise Providence. And when Steude argues that the apparitions could not have resulted from a syllogism about the empty tomb in combination with the Jewish resurrection belief, but only from an actual experience with the mutilated body of the risen Lord, we grant that his argument might be just but for the omission of that great prime factor, the personality of Jesus himself. This, in the last analysis, was the basis of the divine revelation which came to the disciples and to Paul; and the manner of the revelation accorded fully with the intellectual and spiritual development of those to whom it came. All truth is a progressive revelation; in the course of time the hope of immortality has come to rest upon larger inductions than were possible to primitive Christianity.

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